



Final Report on

Documentation of best practices to address the needs of women living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific

Background

There are 1.8 million women living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific region. Their specific issues are not seen as a priority in the regional and national response to HIV apart from HIV and its linkages with prevention of vertical transmission. A large majority of women living with HIV come from communities which are already marginalized and discriminated against based on interrelated factors, such as sex, gender identity, ethnicity, race, and work. These factors intersect with the prejudice that women living with HIV face due to their HIV status, resulting in further discrimination and stigmatization. Access to resources, including from the Global Fund and PEPFAR, for women-led community efforts is limited.

To address those issues, in 2022 and 2023 ICWAP implemented two important projects. The first focused on “Strengthening the engagement of women living with HIV in the context of GC7 in Asia and the Pacific” and, secondly, focused on ICWAP Feminist School: Leadership, Advocacy and Movement Building in Asia and the Pacific. Both projects, funded by TSM and LMF through UNAIDS RST AP and Gender Team Global Centre, were anchored in feminist principles and empowered ICWAP and networks of women living with HIV at the country level to develop strategies for community-driven advocacy.

Through this assignment, ICWAP documented the main outcomes and achievements of these two major projects and their long-term impact to address the needs of women living with HIV. The documentation was conducted in a participatory manner, engaging networks of women living with HIV and other community-led organizations from 8 countries including Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Viet Nam. We know that the more communities own the process, the more powerful the result is as an advocacy tool. This was also a mutual learning moment and capacity development for networks as they have been involved in data collection, analysis, and development of communications/advocacy materials to showcase the findings of the systematization exercise.

The systematization showcases how women-led responses are addressing the needs and issues of women living with HIV in all their diversity and what innovative strategies can be put in place to sustain them. The outcomes of this project will demonstrate to donors and other

stakeholders the importance of supporting women-led organizations in a holistic way and fostering capacity building and empowerment to enable communities to lead.

The findings of this documentation will be shared in the context of the AWID International 2024 Forum to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, a global community event that will bring together feminist, women's rights, gender justice, LBTQI+ and allied movements. This will be an opportunity to mainstream issues faced by women living with HIV into the broader feminist movement.

Rationale of Project

In its Strategy 2023-2028, the Global Fund strengthened its language and commitment to human rights and gender. Of its five top-level, interlinked objectives, one is “maximizing health equity, gender equality and human rights”, while another is “maximizing the engagement of leadership of most affected communities to leave no one behind”. This new language presents an opportunity and entry point for all partners and allies championing gender equality, that is not always present in other funding mechanisms or health-improvement initiatives.

In 2023 and 2024, a total of 8 countries submitted their funding proposals to the Global fund GC7 cycle.. For this funding cycle, the Global Fund required that all funding requests emphasize human rights and gender-related barriers including through a Gender Equality Marker for all requests, which prevent access to healthcare and the achievement of the societal enabler targets by 2030. Building on the projects implemented by ICWAP in 2023 with LMF funds on *Strengthening the leadership of women living with HIV through the ICW Feminist School* and on *Strengthening the engagement of women living with HIV in the context of GC7 in Asia and the Pacific* this assignment produces evidence on effective women-led strategies for strengthened leadership of women living with HIV, for reducing gender-based violence and for promoting sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) for women living with HIV. The assignment complements these two assignments by highlighting the outcomes and showcasing how it impacted the GC7 process in some of the 9 countries. The project also facilitated strategic reflection for further planning to address the needs of women living with HIV and women from key populations, to amplify the gender transformative aspects of the Global Fund grant.

Outcomes

Country Reports

- [Cambodia Report](#) and Mapping
- [India Report](#) and Mapping
- [Indonesia Report](#) and Mapping PDF
- [Nepal Report](#) and Mapping PDF
- [The Philippines Report](#) and Mapping PDF
- [PNG Report](#) and Mapping PDF
- [Thailand Report](#) and Mapping PDF
- [Viet Nam Report](#) and Mapping PDF

[Powerpoint](#)

Final Report

Methodology

This was a highly participatory project that was community-led by graduates of the ICW Feminist School to support continuous feminist growth and community building amongst women living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific. The methodology included having the tools (interview guide) and process supported by the participants through ongoing mentoring.

ICWAP selected country focal points that served as community researchers in this project. The country focal points were women living with HIV who participated in an ICW Feminist School cohort and continue to be active in the national HIV response. Jointly the group of 9 women living with HIV (including the consultant and an ICWAP staff member) attended a kickoff session that included an overview of the project goals, and expectations, and a training on how to use the research tools developed for the key informant interviews¹. The meeting was also a community building opportunity for the team in the spirit of the Feminist School focused on building another opportunity for the women to connect and build their regional advocacy network. The research team decided the best mode of communication which included a WhatsApp group and email. Jointly the group met in 3 different Zoom meetings - to kick off the project - to validate and analyze the reports - to prepare for the presentation.

Following the kickoff meeting each peer researcher conducted between 3 - 6 one hour interviews in their country context over a 6 week period. The lead consultant conducted 1-2 per country as supplementary materials. Key informants included past Feminist School participants and women living with HIV closely engaged in the GC7 Project from 2022 and 2023, as well as key national partners who have previously worked closely with the national network of women living with HIV. We strove to work with partners who would be able to track any impacts and/or changes in the national landscape more broadly.

In addition to the key informant interviews, the data collection included a desk review of any events, advocacy meetings, campaign engagement, and other activities that each country's national networks of women living with HIV have been linked to in the last 24 months. These activities needed to be linked to either the Feminist School or the GC7 Project participants to be included in the country report.

Once all the country data was collected the entire team had a meeting to share their findings. It was at this time that the group also discussed any overlaps amongst countries and areas where we wanted to learn more. This collective sense making ultimately informed this final report framing, including highlighting 2 change stories.

With the data collected the consultant worked with each country team individually to draft a short country report (as documented in this report) and to create mappings to illustrate the activities and impacts following the Feminist School and the GC7 Project implementation.

Analysis

Our analysis is based on 44 interviews broken down into 36 women living with HIV who participated in the ICWAP Feminist School, 4 who participated in follow up national-led Feminist

¹ See Appendix - Figure I

Schools, and 7 national partners (from various country networks) - noting that 3 partners also were feminist school graduates in previous years. All of the countries had recently been engaged in the ICWAP Feminist School with 4 of the countries (Cambodia, India, Thailand and Viet Nam) being engaged in the GC7 Project. Of these countries reported between 14 - 34 activities that women living with HIV shared had a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or the GC7 Project between 2022 and 2024.

All of the countries reported that networks of women living with HIV were able to secure some funding from partners to lead at least one initiative. Funding amounts ranged from approximately \$6,000USD to \$250USD. In countries with more established networks of women living with HIV, some participants shared that they started more localized networks and were able to get small grants to implement programming - these grants ranged from \$2,300USD to \$500USD. Participants reported that being able to conceptualize and implement their own activities raised the profile of women living with HIV, and created new programming and initiatives based on the direct needs of their community. These activities ranged from strategic planning (India, Viet Nam) to CEDAW training (the Philippines) to the development of apps to make accessible HIV treatment information for people with disabilities (Indonesia). Across the region, those who received funding shared that it built their confidence to look for other opportunities and multiple groups got more than one funding opportunity. The small grants were particularly helpful because they were generally accessible to smaller networks and carried less administrative burden, whereas some of the larger donor grants are not possible for networks without registration and/or strong internal systems. While these funding opportunities were helpful, they were not enough to have a meaningful impact on reducing gender inequality in the HIV response, though the activities did bolster the overall engagement of women living with HIV in the national response.

All 8 countries reported that participants interviewed were engaged in and/or led follow-up capacity building activities for other women living with HIV after the Feminist School. In all of the countries women living with HIV felt it was important to share the learnings from the Feminist School with other women from their community and in some cases their movement partners and their family, implementation of these was anywhere from a brief webinar to a national replication of the Feminist School. At least one participant interviewed from each country shared that there was at least one opportunity for her national advocacy engagement - though in most cases this was expressed by multiple feminist school graduates.

Some countries such as Cambodia, India and Viet Nam revived their national networks of women living with HIV after the GC7 Project and were able to get resources to do strategic planning and/or reinstated in national dialogues. All eight country networks shared that the Feminist School module on the Global Fund was helpful for explaining the basics of Global Fund engagement. All the networks reported having a link to the CCM through, in many cases, an elected representative, such as PNG, Thailand, India, Nepal or a close partner who they could connect with to help amplify the needs of women living with HIV in Global Fund advocacy spaces. At least one (though in more than half the countries it was at least 2) participants from the Feminist School, had opportunities for additional regional or global advocacy engagement.

These included regional ICWAP advocacy campaigns (16 Days of Activism), regional trainings (CLM or PLHIV Stigma Index trainings in Bangkok), global conferences (AIDS 2024) and being on the ICWAP board. Those with stronger English language skills were more likely to be engaged in regional and global opportunities.

3 of the countries specifically shared a positive impact on new youth leadership following strong engagement and mentorship of young women living with HIV in both the Feminist School and/or the GC7 Project. In Cambodia and Nepal, young women living with HIV who graduated from the Feminist School are leading the national networks, while in Viet Nam it was the first time they started a support group for young women and have implemented their own activities. While all of the countries talked about working with other key populations, 3 countries talked about the Feminist School opening up new connections and strengthening intersectional dialogues amongst networks in ways that were mutually supportive such as in India and Indonesia.

6 countries shared a direct correlation between economic empowerment of either Feminist School participants and/or due to the GC7 Project. In some cases Feminist School graduates were hired by larger partner organizations and/or received funding (Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal), other saw direct benefits of women being hired as a result of their advocacy through Global Fund programs (India, PNG), and some networks implemented economic empowerment workshops that supported women living with HIV to become paralegals, or to open small market stalls (Nepal). In the GC7 Project reports, economic empowerment was one of the main issues that women living with HIV shared as a priority, suggesting that the Feminist School might actually be a helpful tool to support that need.

All of the participants interviewed shared that participating in the Feminist School increased their awareness about feminism and in turn raised their self-esteem. At least 5 participants shared that because of the Feminist School they left a situation of intimate partner violence. While not all the participants interviewed were still connected to ICWAP, and in some cases struggled maintaining engagement with their national networks (based primarily on rural location though in few cases because of interpersonal difficulties) – ever single person interview shared that they were continuing to be a feminist leader in some capacity which included mentoring and teaching others about feminism and the rights of women living with HIV.

Country	Feminist School ²	GC7 Project	Related Activities Between 2022	Economic Empowerment ⁴	Capacity Building ⁵	National Advocacy	Global Fund Engagement ⁷	Cross Movement Collaboration ⁸	Youth Leadership ⁹	Regional/ Global Advocacy	Funding
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² Astrix indicates that there were previous cohorts of Feminist School participants between 2015 - 2019.

⁴ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV getting paid work.

⁵ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV in their community having additional capacity building opportunities.

⁷ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV and Global Fund awareness leading to increased Global Fund engagement.

⁸ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV increasing their collaborations with other movements.

⁹ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and the empowerment of young women living with HIV in leadership roles.

			- 2024 ³			Engagement ⁶				Engagement ¹⁰	Opportunities ¹¹
Cambodia	2023, 2024	2023	20	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES
India	2022, 2024*	2023	22	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES
Indonesia	2022, 2024*		34	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES
Nepal	2022, 2023, 2024*		25	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
The Philippines	2022, 2023, 2024*		18	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES	YES
Papua New Guinea	2023, 2024		18	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES	YES
Thailand	2022, 2023, 2024*	2023	14		YES	YES	YES			YES	YES
Viet Nam	2023*	2023	16		YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES
Total	8	8	167	6	8	8	8	3	3	8	8

This chart is an overview of some high level findings from the research for each country.
*Green indicates that it was mentioned directly during at least one of the interviews
**Yellow indicates that it was not mentioned directly as a targeted outcome but there was evidence that there was likely some benefit.
***Red indicates that there was not any direct mention or evidence that there was some benefit.

Case Study 1

Cambodia - Youth Mentorship to Revitalize National Network

The Cambodian Community of Women Living with HIV (CCW+) was selected to participate in the GC7 Project in April 2023. Despite the network not being officially active since 2017, their former Coordinator was still linked to ICWAP at the regional level. Working with the Executive Director of the Cambodian People Living with HIV CPN+ and the former CCW+ Coordinator, a mentorship strategy was developed to build the capacity of three young women living with HIV to work alongside the CPN+ Director. In this process, the young women learned about the Global Fund including the CCM, they were actively learning how to lead focus groups of women living with HIV and collect data, and they were learning how their data could be used in advocacy. Within a three-month time span, one of the young women was selected to be the new national focal point for CCW+. Continuing the dedicated mentorship, the CPN+ Director

³ Number based on activities reported during the interviews. The numbers are likely less as most activities were under reported. Numbers do not include multiples of programs or ongoing meetings, or planning sessions - for example the newly established youth support group in Viet Nam was counted once despite having regular meetings and connection points.

⁶ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV having increased national advocacy opportunities.

¹⁰ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and women living with HIV having regional and/or global advocacy opportunities.

¹¹ Interviewees reported that there was a direct correlation between the Feminist School and/or GC7 Project and national networks of women living with HIV and/or the women living with HIV's localized networks getting funding for gender empowerment.

advocated for her to join partnership meetings in Phnom Penh to reintroduce CCW+ to partners who in some cases were unaware of their existence. The same three young women were invited to participate in the ICWAP Feminist School in September 2023 in an intensive four-day program, further developing their capacity to engage in advocacy at the national level. The committed and enthusiastic young Cambodian team developed an advocacy action plan with several obtainable milestones for their newly emerging network within the 2023/2024 calendar year. Their very first project they led was to reinstate a social media presence through creating a new active Facebook Page. Throughout the year, they have been nurtured through regular capacity building opportunities and continuously mentored by key partners in the HIV response in Cambodia and by ICWAP team. Following the Feminist school their group grew to 5 young women, and three of them were able to strategically get paid employment in other NGOs where they could maintain their livelihood to better engage and support CCW+. The GC7 Project became the catalyst for the rebirth of CCW+, reinvigorating a new generation of young women living with HIV to speak out about inequalities they were seeing in Cambodia. **In late 2024, CCW got \$3800 USD to implement Feminist Leadership Training and in addition, in November the Global Fund allowed CCW+ to submit proposed activities for the budget reallocation for this GC7 in the year 2025 to 2026 for an amount of \$20,000USD.

Case Study 2

Nepal - Streamlining National Feminist Schools as Global Fund Outcomes

In 2018, three participants from the National Federation of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (NFWLHA) were selected to attend a Feminist Leadership Training in Bangkok. These participants immersed themselves in learning and skill-building sessions focused on feminist principles, advocacy, and leadership development, gaining insights essential for empowering women in the context of HIV. After returning to Nepal, the participants actively engaged with women leaders within local community-based organizations, sharing their knowledge and discussing how feminist leadership could be applied within their own communities to address HIV-related challenges.

By late 2019, NFWLHA was selected as a Subrecipient (SR) under the Global Fund. During this time, NFWLHA's President underscored the critical need for specialized training to equip women and young girls living with HIV with the skills to lead, advocate, and navigate societal challenges effectively. Through persistent advocacy and dialogue with the Principal Recipient (PR), NFWLHA successfully integrated Feminist Leadership Training into its programming funded by the Global Fund.

Since 2020, this inclusion has allowed NFWLHA to reach more than 100 young girls and women living with HIV in Nepal. The training has become a powerful platform for these individuals, helping them develop leadership capabilities, gain advocacy experience, and become more active participants in shaping community responses to HIV. Through this program, NFWLHA

continues to empower a new generation of women leaders, fostering a supportive network that strengthens the resilience and visibility of women living with HIV across Nepal.

Recommendations

The TSM funded technical assistance to support the implementation of the ICWAP Feminist School and particularly the intersections with the Global Fund have had numerous impacts that continue to ripple at national and local levels. In countries where there is continued support, there has been visible growth in network growth and engagement. This report shows that even small amounts of resources are beneficial in maintaining momentum and engagement. Therefore, here are general recommendations to continue to support networks of women living with HIV following TSM and UNAIDS technical support.

- Partners should support ongoing systems strengthening of networks of women living with HIV and allow for the network to have security in some basic areas such as a convening space with internet access, realizing the Global AIDS Strategy target.
- Partners should look at innovative ways to include ongoing/annual national Feminist School training opportunities built into national programming (see Nepal as an example funded by Global Fund resources).
- Partners should increase support for ongoing Global Fund engagement now to ensure meaningful engagement of women living with HIV in the next funding round. Consider repeating the and expanding the GC7 Project for the GC8 processes but in order for it to be meaningful start at least one year prior to the proposal submission.
- UNAIDS Country Offices need to work closer with networks of women living with HIV to better understand, finetune and amplify their messages in decision making space.
- ICWAP needs to strengthen communications throughout the region looking for innovative ways to close language barriers and allow for more information sharing horizontally between members. This could be a quarterly newsletter, an animated WhatsApp group or various other activities that promote sharing and networking within the region.
- ICWAP should be supported by partners to offer ongoing small, medium and larger grant programs to allow for barrier free grants of feminist-led initiatives in the HIV response to Feminist School graduates.
- Strengthen the sustainability of networks for women living with HIV (WLHIV) for ongoing advocacy, support, and community mobilization through the following 1) Advocacy for integration into national health budgets; 2) Training women living with HIV in leadership, advocacy, project management, and digital literacy to strengthen the networks' functionality and resilience and to enhance members' ability to secure funding, 3) Inclusive and Intersectional advocacy: Networks that address not only HIV but also intersecting issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive health, and socioeconomic inequality tend to garner wider support and attract partnerships, enhancing sustainability. This also helps ensure the networks stay relevant and responsive to members' needs; 4) Policy Support and Recognition: Formal recognition of WLHIV networks within national HIV strategies ensures greater institutional support.

Key Informant Discussion Guide

This document is to support interviews with key informants the ICWAP about the impacts of the implementation of the ICW Feminist School

Purpose

The purpose of the interview is to understand:

- To evaluate if there were any long term impacts (benefits or challenges) for networks of women living with HIV in countries that implemented the ICW Feminist School?
- Are there any overall impacts for the country network of women living with HIV?
- Are there any best practices that we can build off of for future work?
- To gather a list of events, activities and connections that could be related to the implementation of the ICW Feminist School and GC7 support in 2022 and 2023.
- Where there any specific benefits to address gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health rights and access to HIV services for women living with HIV as a result of these two interventions (Feminist School and GC7 support)
- Was the GC7 support effective (including training on Global Fund in the Feminist School and GC7 project) to strengthen participation of women living with HIV in Global Fund processes and advocate for their needs in CCM?
- Way forward to strengthen strong communication with women living with HIV

Duration

1 hour

Number of Participants

2-4 interviews

Participant criteria

- Experience engaging with ICWAP, or the national network of women living with HIV in country
- Knowledge of the history and overall landscape of people living with HIV in country and regionally
- Having expertise in the area of women led interventions
- Expertise in SRHR and gender and GBV
- Development partners who support CBOs and women's groups and women led organisations
- Women and girls living with HIV who were benefited from ICWAP Feminist school and GC7 assessed countries

Documentation

- Record the session in full and have it transcribed into English within 3 working days of

the interview and/or take comprehensive notes of the interview of key points.

Interview Questions

These are the main guideline questions for the interview. Please explore and clarify responses with follow up questions.

Before you start you must read to the interviewee the purpose of this interview and that their responses will be used to inform the report for both the country and regional reports documenting the impacts of the ICW Feminist School. Names and organizational affiliations will be listed in the research, unless you do not want us to use them. Please let us know if the participant wants to remain anonymous. In order to start the interview the participant needs to give their Informed consent - consent can be obtained verbally.

Warm Up Questions

What is your name, your organization and how long you've been engaged in the HIV response in [insert country]?

ONLY FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV FROM THE FEMINIST SCHOOL

- Did you participate in the ICW Feminist School and/or the GC7 strengthening networks of women living with HIV projects?
- When did you participate and why or how you got engaged in the project?
- Can you share more about your experience(s) participating? What did you do?
- Can you say more about the other women you connected with and if you are still in contact with them?
- Did your team do any activities during or after the Feminist School? (example all teams were asked to make advocacy plans - did the group do any of those?) If yes, tell us about them? Did they lead to any other projects or activities that your group did (think about Love Positive Women, World AIDS Day, 16 Days of Violence, Support Don't Punish, International Women's Day and other important days)?
- Did you connect with any other partners, donors or activists as a result of engaging in these projects?
- Would you say that you personally are more connected or less connected after the ICW Feminist School?
- In general, do you see any changes (even if small) in the way that women living with HIV are engaging in your country? Please share why or why not.

- Do you see any changes in the way that other partners engage with women living with HIV in your country? Why or why not?
- Can you tell a story about a woman you saw grow in your network as a result of the work that your network has done? How is this connected to the ICW Feminist School and/or GC7 project?
- Are (or were) there any additional activities that your group wanted to do following the Feminist School or GC7 but you couldn't because of certain barriers? If yes, please share more about what you wanted to do and some of the barriers.
- What do you feel are direct impacts of YOUR participation in the ICW Feminist School? Did you get any other opportunities? Do you see any shifts in feminist thought amongst your peers?
- Did participating in the Feminist School change anything in your personal life? If so, how?
- What do you feel are direct results of some women in your country participating in the ICW Feminist School and/or GC7 project?
- Are you or other women living with HIV still connected to ICWAP? If so, how?
- Have you seen any shifts in the engagement of women living with HIV in national advocacy and or processes? Please share examples.
- Do you see value in ICWAP implementing the Feminist School in [insert country]? Please explain.
- Did you see value in ICWAP supporting the national network to learn about and engage in the Global Fund processes? Please explain.
- Was the GC7 support effective (including training on the Global Fund module in the Feminist School and the GC7 project) to strengthen participation of women living with HIV in Global Fund processes and advocate for their needs?
- Where there any specific benefits to address gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health rights and access to HIV services for women living with HIV as a result of these two interventions (Feminist School and GC7 support)
- Is there anything else you'd like to share pertaining to this topic?

FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS ONLY

- Can you please share what you know about the ICW Feminist School? *(If they do not know much about it please share this – The ICW Feminist School is a project that was started by women living with HIV in 2015 and was first implemented in the region in 2017. Since that time it has been implemented six times at the regional level including in 2022 and 2023 with women living with HIV in our country)*
- If yes, do you know any activities that the national network of women living with HIV did prior to 2022? In which ways were they engaged?
- Have you seen any shifts in the engagement of women living with HIV in national advocacy and or processes in the last 2 years?
- Do you know if the national network are connected with any other partners, donors or activists as a result of engaging in these projects?
- In general, do you see any changes (even if small) in the way that women living with HIV are engaging in your country? Please share why or why not.
- Do you see any changes in the way that other partners engage with women living with HIV in your country? Why or why not?
- Have you seen any shifts in the engagement of women living with HIV in national advocacy and or processes? Regional processes? Please give examples.
- Do you see value in ICWAP implementing the Feminist School in [insert country]? Please explain.
- Did you see value in ICWAP supporting the national network to learn about and engage in the Global Fund processes? Please explain.
- Is there anything else you'd like to share pertaining to this topic?